

Post-Book Wash 4/20/76

Book Business



By JOYCE ILLIG

Acquiescence and Hostility

HUBERT HUMPHREY'S autobiography, *The Education of a Public Man: My Life and Politics*, will say that he would recommend the vice-presidency to any other man or woman, but will also spend several pages illustrating the pitfalls he encountered in his own time on that job. Or perhaps it won't, but it did in an early, uncorrected page proof sent to some reviewers.

"I am convinced that a vice-president, regardless of talent and the President's personality, has a choice between two relationships: acquiescence and hostility," Humphrey states in the book. That statement remains unchanged in a page proof also sent to reviewers, representing a later stage of the book's progress toward print, but some other statements that might be considered inflammatory seem to have disappeared.

After discussing the "tension and harassment" of the 1968 presidential campaign, for example, Humphrey tells us, in one deleted passage, how he greeted the new year: "As midnight struck on December 31, I went into the bathroom of my home and flushed the toilet. A silly gesture, but it seemed appropriate."

Between the discarded lines, one reads Humphrey's feeling that he himself had been flushed by Lyndon Johnson and his associates, and that he felt powerless to do anything about it:

"When I was frozen out, the symptoms were everywhere. The staff took their cues from the boss. It meant sitting outside Joe Califano's office, while he, an arrogant and pretentious young aide, went about his work inside at his own pace. Or Marvin Watson

cancelling the use of a boat on the Potomac just before my guests were to arrive.

"Sometimes I wasn't frozen, just forgotten. The ordinary humiliations were petty, shoulder-shrugging, but they could be major, such as being unofficially excluded from the National Security Council meetings. If I said something of interest . . . the President not only frustrated human desire for praise or recognition, he openly clamped down. He and the press were hardly in love, and he felt that my staff and I could add to the Administration's controversies. This made relationships with journalists, men and women with whom I had been open and honest all my years in Washington, newly awkward.

Johnson did not like my being interviewed. He decreed through Marvin Watson that we would carry no press on my journeys around the United States. Local press attention was acceptable, probably because it was unavoidable."

One of Humphrey's most serious complaints, blipped in the revised page proofs, is that his support of Johnson's Vietnam policies was obtained under false pretences: "Except for the President, I had been the Administration's primary defender of the increasingly ugly and unpopular war. I may have been wrong, but I acted on my duty and my information. I was under the impression for a long while that what I was reading of intelligence reports was precisely what the President was getting. I was told that would be the case. As it turned out, it was not so."

The book will be published, presumably without most of the quotes above and some others of equal interest, by Doubleday on June 4. Humphrey has worked on it for seven years, with the aid of his long-time friend and press secretary Norman Sherman, who edited transcripts of Humphrey's dictated text.

For Whom the Nobel Tolls

IS ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER a front-runner for this year's Nobel Prize for literature? Roger Straus Jr., president of Farrar, Straus & Giroux said that people in German, Norwegian and Swedish publishing circles have mentioned it to him and that "the Swedes are putting together all kinds of material on Singer just in case." Since the beginning of this year, Straus said, he has been getting requests for material—for example, clippings of all the reviews of all Singer's books.